



The President's Daily Brief

15 June 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

VIETNAM

Enemy attacks are on the increase in the Mekong Delta, with the heaviest fighting in Kien Tuong and Kien Phong provinces. Casualties are high on both sides after three days of battle around the town of Tuyen Binh in Kien Tuong Province. Government forces are improving their positions at An Loc, having cleared the enemy from much of the town and re-occupied the city's airstrip. The effort to open Route 13 south of An Loc remains stalled, however.

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A fresh nuance on the conduct of the war appeared in Hanoi's daily newspaper on 1 June. The article called for a reorganization of society that would enable North Vietnam to wage a protracted war and insisted that victory did not require all the heavy equipment and material that the US has at its disposal. There was no direct reference to Soviet or Chinese aid, but boastful claims about the country's ability to survive on its own implicitly minimize Moscow's and Peking's contributions to the war effort. Alluding to an assessment of the "new situation," the article gave the impression that the North Vietnamese leaders have only recently decided on the precise political line it articulated.

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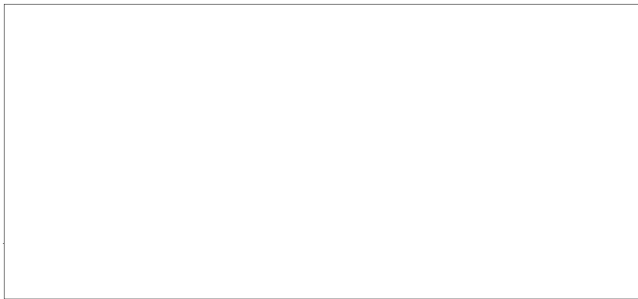
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KOREA

In a conversation with Ambassador Habib on Monday, South Korean President Pak Chong-hui registered reservations about the course of the secret dialogue now under way with Pyongyang. He made it clear that he does not think the private negotiations should go forward without tangible progress on practical issues in the more open Red Cross talks. He has declined North Korean requests--pressed hard during North Korean Vice Premier Pak Song-chol's recent visit to Seoul--for the start of political negotiations and an early public revelation of the talks, and he has put off considering any personal meeting with North Korean Premier Kim Il-sung.

During Pak Song-chol's visit, however, some progress was made in advancing the three-point policy Kim had outlined during his discussions in Pyongyang with South Korean CIA Director Yi Hu-rak early last month. The two sides agreed on the first two points--no collusion with foreign powers and no armed provocation--but were unable to iron out their wide divergence of views on the timing and modalities of moving toward national unity. The two negotiators agreed to establish a coordinating committee to continue contacts, but President Pak believes this committee should be made up of lower level representatives and should deal only with the Red Cross talks, and possibly with misunderstandings arising from incidents along the DMZ. He has ruled out any additional travel by Yi, at least in the near future.

Pak's remarks to Ambassador Habib reflect his own personal concern, as well as the reservations of some of his colleagues about North Korean intentions. He appears particularly suspicious that the North Koreans may try to use the dialogue to divide the South Korean "national consensus" rather than to solve differences. Perhaps expressing more a judgment than a fear, Pak also said that the North Koreans' recent show of apparent reasonableness was intended to mislead the US public into demanding an early withdrawal of US forces from Korea and an end to the military modernization program. In fact, North Korea's Premier Kim Il-sung and Vice Premier Pak Song-chol have both publicly expressed such ideas.

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Pyongyang has been voicing in public a much more flexible line on dealing with the South than it has put forward so far in private. The North has suggested publicly that if US troops were removed, Pyongyang would permit progress at the Red Cross talks before a political dialogue was begun.

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NOTE

USSR: Although one of the aircraft accompanying President Podgorny went on to Hanoi yesterday, Podgorny himself remained overnight in Calcutta for talks with the Indian foreign minister. (Mrs. Gandhi left India on a long-planned European jaunt on 14 June.) Podgorny arrived in Hanoi this morning. According to a broadcast from New Delhi, he gave the Indians a full account of his recent talks with President Nixon, and also discussed the situations in the Middle East and in Vietnam. Podgorny may also have used the opportunity to underscore the importance the USSR attaches to the forthcoming Indo-Pakistani peace talks.

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

While the Communists seemed to be opening a new battlefront in the Mekong Delta, Hanoi's press has raised the prospect of an indefinite extension of the war.

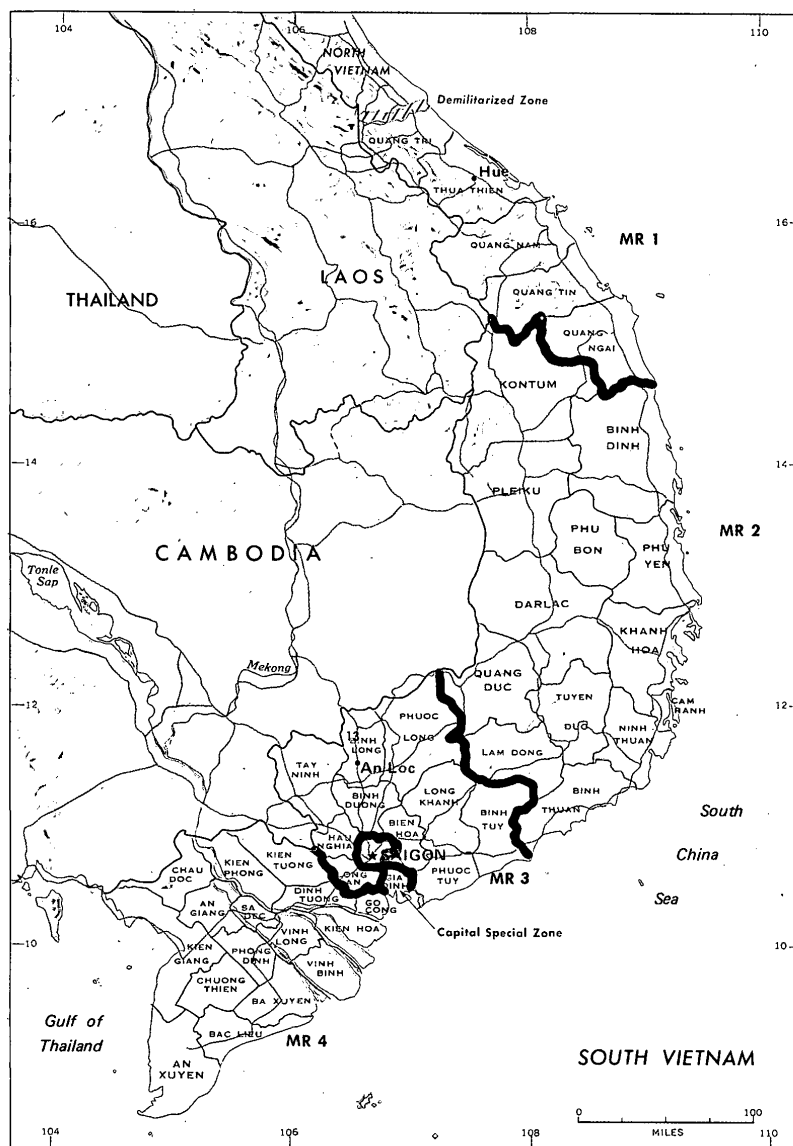
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South Korean President Pak seems to have braked the secret talks with the North Koreans. (Page 3)

Soviet President Podgorny arrived in Hanoi this morning. (Page 5)

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